

Central issue prices of foodgrains

1227. DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government propose to reduce the central issue prices of foodgrains distributed under the Public Distribution System and food-for-work scheme;
- (b) if so, what are the details thereto; and
- (c) by when a decision is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHIRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) to (c) The Government has reduced the Central Issue Price of wheat from Rs. 830/- per quintal to Rs. 610/- per quintal and for rice from Rs. 1130/- per quintal to Rs. 830/- per quintal for APL families with effect from 12.7.2001 till 31.3.2002 or till surplus stocks last, whichever is earlier. The BPL prices, which were to be raised on 1.10.2000 for rice and 1.4.2001 for wheat have been retained at the existing levels.

As decided by the Government on 2.11.2000, foodgrains are available for allotment to States/UTs for Food for Work Programme at present at BPL rates which are Rs. 415/- per quintal for wheat and Rs. 565/- per quintal for rice. Foodgrains have also been allotted free of cost to drought affected States as an additionality under the Food-for-Work Programme launched by the Ministry of Rural Development in the drought affected areas.

Shortage of storage capacity in West Bengal

1228. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government have proposed in the meeting of the Chief Ministers that responsibility of running the PDS should henceforth be of the State Government and they should take up procurement and distribution of PDS items;

(b) whether it is also a fact that West Bengal has taken up the task of procurement and distribution of rice for BPL;

(c) whether Government are aware that West Bengal needs 4 lakh MT of rice annually for this purpose while the storage capacity available with the State is only 1 lakh 80 thousand MT; and

(d) if so, how this discrepancy would be overcome?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) and (b) The scheme of decentralized procurement of foodgrains was discussed during the Chief Ministers Conference on 21.5.2001 and during the meeting of Standing Committee of Union Ministers and Chief Ministers on Food Management and Agriculture Exports on 6.7.2001. It was clarified in the meeting of Standing Committee that the scheme of decentralized procurement of foodgrains will not be imposed on any State. Further, consultations will be held with the State Governments and sharing of gains under the scheme will be considered with those States which agree to adopt the scheme. The Government of West Bengal adopted this scheme for rice from 1997-98 Kharif Marketing Season.

(c) As per information given by the Government of West Bengal, the annual requirement of rice for BPL population in the State is 5.54 lakh MTs and the storage capacity available with the State Government is 1.80 lakh MT.

(d) The process of procurement continues simultaneously with the process of off take from the godowns and as such at no point of time the entire storage capacity of procured rice is saturated.